

Editorial: Shoveling out together

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Mother Nature has been generous with snow, and winter has a long way to run, with more snow predicted for today and next week. Already, it has gotten hard to find places to put all the stuff. We expect to spend the weekend cleaning up in anticipation of the next storm, and we won't be alone.

So here's a reminder to think of your neighbors when you're out with the shovel this weekend. That means don't blow your snow into someone else's driveway, for starters. But we also urge people to take responsibility for clearing sidewalks - and not just the stretch directly in front of your house.

People who must walk to get places need a continuous path. If the sidewalk is blocked, they take to the streets. This is dangerous, because the streets are already icy and narrowed by snow piles, and especially dangerous after dark. Even in the daylight, drivers may not see the kids walking to school, hidden momentarily behind a snowbank.

Drive carefully, and do pedestrians a favor. Clear the sidewalks in front of your home or business, as many local bylaws and liability warnings require, but also do the sidewalk of the house next door, where your neighbors are lucky to be in Florida for January. Clear the snow from sidewalks near intersections, where plows have left small mountains too high for pedestrians to climb. Pay special attention to areas where snow piles are blocking sightlines at intersections - the fender-bender you help prevent may be your own.

Yes, municipal employees are paid to clear the snow, and they'll get around to some sidewalks eventually. But it may be a long time, if ever, before they get to your neighborhood. So take responsibility for clearing paths wherever they are needed. Spread some sand and salt on the most slippery areas.

Get the shovel out this weekend and lend a hand. Hardy New Englanders don't wait for someone else to do their share of the work. We survive the winter together, by helping each other dig out.

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